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Secretariat

Judith Muir
Calgary's Victim/Crisis Unit
Calgary Police Department
Calgary, Alberta

CALGARY'S VICTIM/CRISIS UNIT A SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

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INTRODUCTION

The past 10 years in Canada has seen increased awareness of the needs of crime victims, and the development of service programs to address these needs. The Calgary Police Service's VICTIM/CRISIS UNIT (V/CU) was among these program initiatives. Its recent development has provided an opportunity to examine the experiences and achievements in serving Calgary crime victims.

The information contained in this report summarizes and highlights data that were collected throughout the operation of the program.[1] This is supplemented by a more general discussion of some issues which have emerged from the data, and from the researcher's observations and discussions with staff over a lengthy period of time. Information is organized into the following areas:

- SECTION 1 - a description of the program and its activities over a one year period;
- SECTION 2 - a summary of victim responses to and satisfaction with the program;
- SECTION 3 - program impact on and acceptance by the police community in Calgary, and other agencies in the criminal justice system; and
- SECTION 4 - a discussion of some issues which arise from the above data and some general implications that this program and research holds for others.

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[1] The reports which contain these data and tables, in complete form, are Calgary's Victim/Crisis Unit: Evaluation and Final Report, and Victim Services in Calgary: The Program, the Research. These reports may be requested from the Research Division of the Ministry of the Solicitor-General, Canada.

SECTION 1 - PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In June 1981, a victim service program was initiated by the Calgary Police Service with the financial assistance of the Solicitor-General, Canada. The model adopted was that of a police-based program using volunteers to complement, not duplicate, crime victim services already available from community-based programs.[2]

Over a period of time, this new program initiative along with the limited services that were previously available in the police department (crisis and clerical) were integrated to form the Victim/Crisis Unit (V/CU), and located in the Community Services Section.

The V/CU consists of a Sergeant, two Constables, a Volunteer Coordinator, five crisis workers, 2 clerical support staff and a number of volunteers. The Sergeant supervises all staff and oversees administrative functions, while the Volunteer Coordinator recruits and supervises volunteers. The Constables are responsible for training volunteers, assisting in service delivery when necessary, and are involved in program promotion within and outside the police department.

Crisis workers respond to police requests for assistance or crisis intervention by attending immediately at the scene of the crisis and providing

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[2] Existing services may include women's shelters, sexual assault centers, counselling agencies, etc.

FIGURE 2.1 PROGRAM PLACEMENT IN POLICE DEPARTMENT

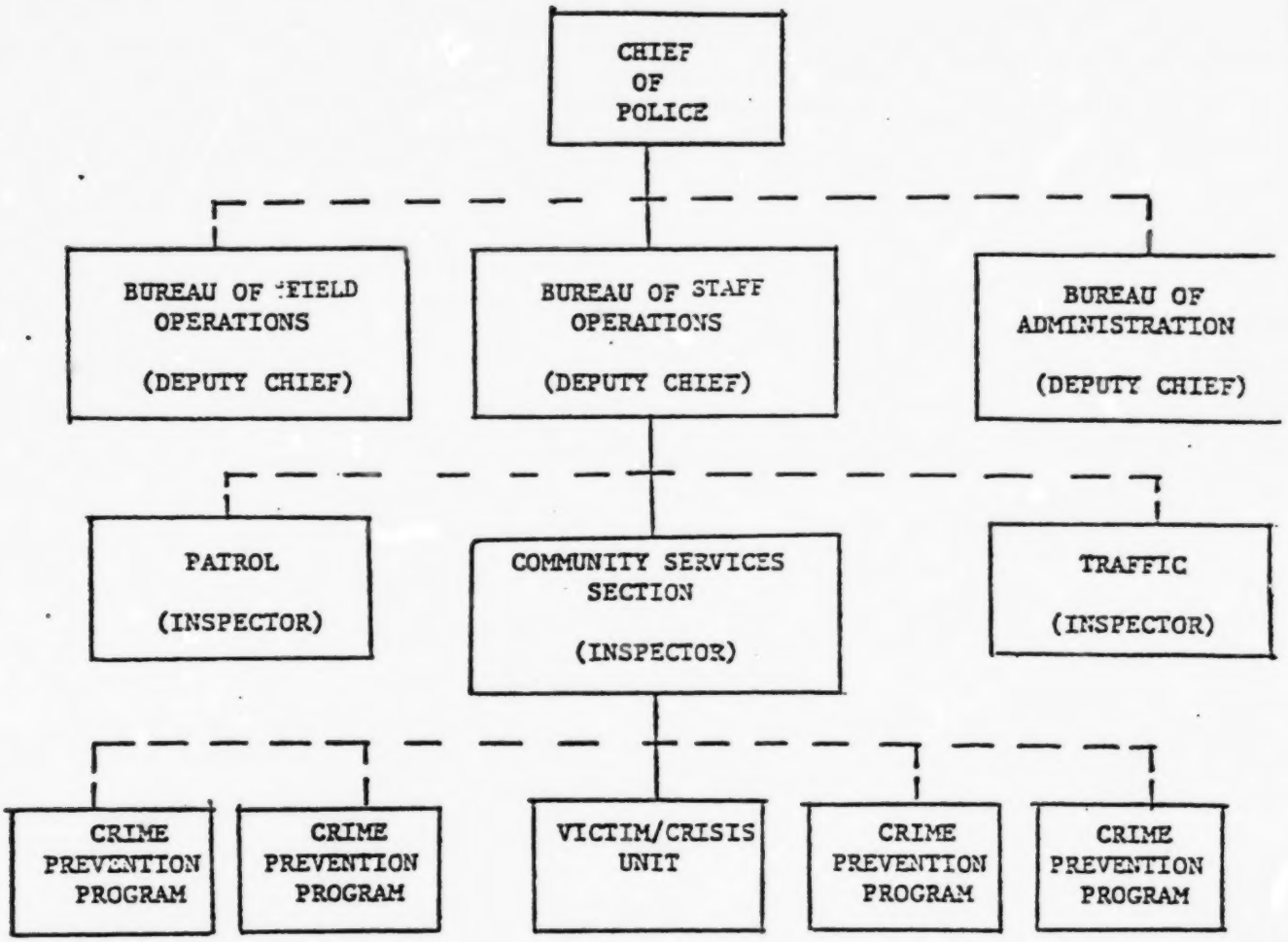
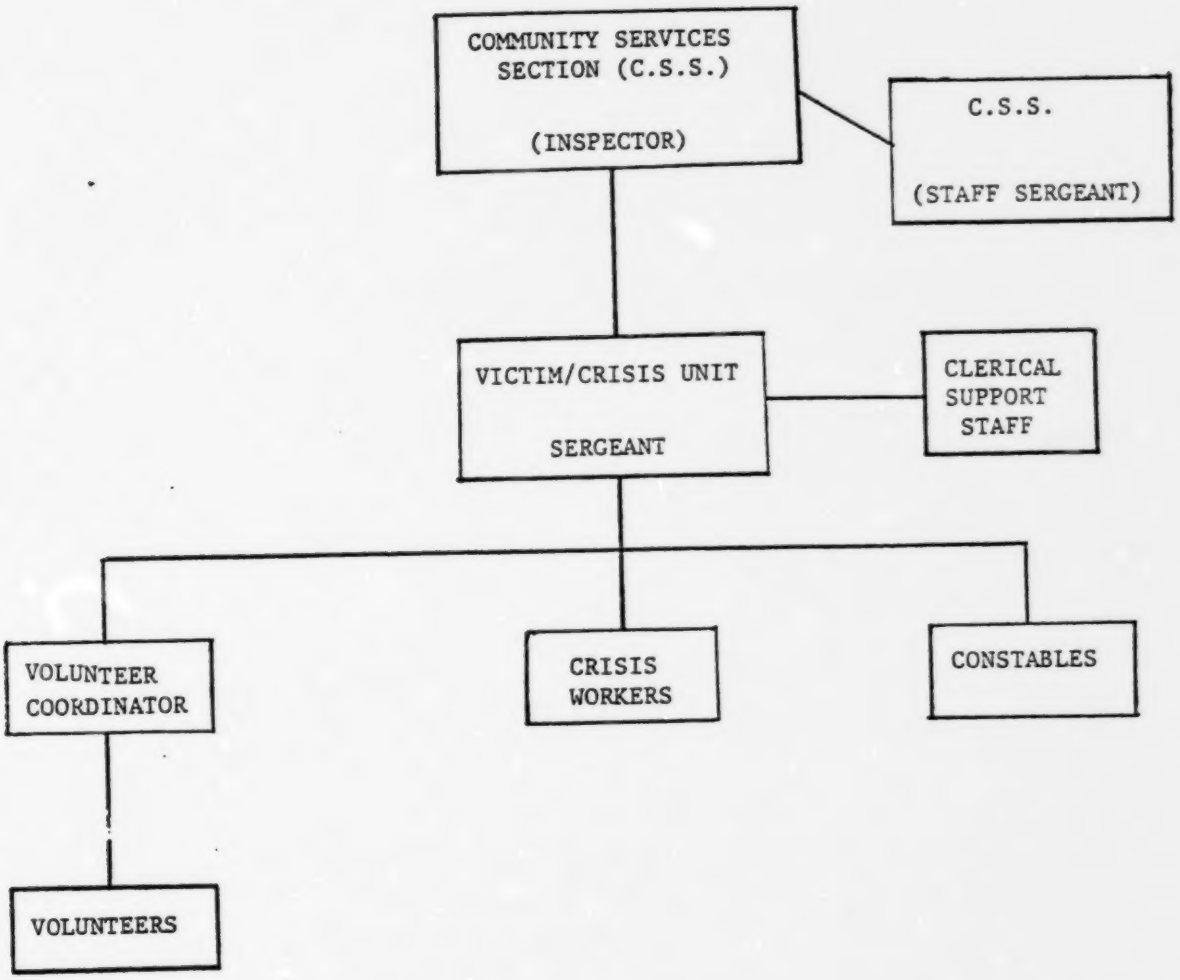


FIGURE 2.2 VICTIM/CRISIS UNIT -- INTERNAL ORGANIZATION



counselling, support and/or referral to those in need.Support staff perform clerical functions and answer telephone enquiries of a routine nature from crime victims.

Volunteers provide the direct service to crime victims (as listed below in Program Operations and Service). Volunteers are recruited from the community-at-large and the program also serves as practicum placement for social welfare students in Calgary. Each community volunteer is required to work a minimum of 3 hours per week. The program attempts to provide 125 hours of volunteer work per week. Hours of operation are from 0800 to 2000 Monday and 0800 to 0130 Tuesday to Saturday.

Program Goals

The elaboration of program goals followed a needs assessment study and discussions with police administrators and program staff.[3] Divided into 5 areas they are -

1. To ensure that the emergency needs of crime victims in Calgary are met. These emergency services include counselling, referral, emotional support, repair to property, accommodation arrangements and transportation. They are provided at the request of police officers at the scene of an incident.

2. To provide required follow-up (or non-emergency) services to victims of 'attacks against the person' (e.g., homicides, assaults, robberies, sex offenses). These service needs are identified primarily through program initiated telephone calls to victims of certain crimes.

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[3] A further goal related to speedier property return has not been fully implemented and is not discussed in this paper.

3. To identify, contact and provide all elderly crime victims with the services they require after victimization.

4. To keep crime victims informed of important case information by sending form letters to crime victims, informing them of their case numbers and appropriate court information.

5. To ensure that eligible victims are made aware of the kinds of financial reparation available to them. Specifically, this includes assistance with Crimes Compensation and restitution claims and information about Small Claims Court.

Target Population

In order to achieve the above mentioned goals, V/CU focused its attention on the following segments of the crime victim population -

- those in need of emergency services (or those in crisis);
- the elderly crime victim;
- victims of assaults, sex offenses, robberies, attempted homicides or families of homicide victims; and
- victims of incidents where a party was charged with an offense.

The V/CU received its clients from 3 sources. First, the Volunteer Coordinator screened police reports; second, police officers requested that workers contact specific clients; and third, clients on their own initiative called in to request assistance.

Program Operation

Service activities can be divided into two types - crisis and follow-up. 'Crisis intervention' services are handled by crisis workers who respond

immediately to officers' requests for assistance. They attend at the scene of the incident, and are briefed by officers who are then free for other calls. After performing their intervention activities, workers return to the office to await further calls. At least one crisis worker is available daily until 0100 (2130 on Sundays).

'Follow-up' work is performed by other staff and volunteers who work from 0800 to 2000, Monday to Friday. Each day they receive police reports on all homicides, sex offenses, robberies, housebreakings, thefts and damages. These reports are screened by staff and appropriate cases given to a volunteer who telephones the victims to determine whether any assistance is needed as a result of the incident. Most frequently, needed services are provided over the phone, such as information about the case, about charges, or the court case, or some provision of crime prevention information. If client response indicates need for a home visit, the volunteer offers this service. Volunteers also offer such services as court accompaniment, referral to specialized agencies, home security checks, etc. Records are kept of these service activities and maintained. Clients are also identified by referrals from police officers, crisis workers and social service agencies.

Many incoming calls from crime victims are received daily. Typically these callers require their case number for insurance purposes, the officer's name, or whether officers have "found anything" or have "charged anyone". Callers may also have additional property to report stolen and may wish to have their file brought up-to-date on this matter. On average calls take 5 to 10 minutes to

complete and are handled by support personnel and volunteers.

Program Services

The following were the most commonly provided services -

- at-the-scene crisis intervention;
- counselling, support, or simply someone to talk to;
- home or hospital visits;
- transportation;
- information about the status of the police investigation, or other case details such as case numbers, insurance particulars, whether charges were laid;
- information about court proceedings, dates and court outcomes;
- information about and referral to social service programs and agencies (e.g., counselling services, information about legal services available and where to get them, senior citizen programs);
- information about and assistance in applying for various forms of financial reparation;
- court accompaniment;
- information about crime prevention techniques and programs;
- daily form letter mailings to property crime victims apprising them of their case number for insurance purposes; and
- responses to telephone inquiries from victims and insurance companies primarily about case particulars or insurance concerns (est. 70 per day).

Service Delivery Activities- A 12-Month Summary

Service delivery activities were monitored for a one year period (November 1982 - October 1983). Brokendown according to type of activity and staff

performing the service they were -

Table 1: Number of clients served over a 12-month period	
	(n)
Crisis service (crisis workers)	168 *
Follow-up services (volunteers)	1,646 **
Telephone inquiries (volunteers/clerical staff)	17,640
TOTAL	19,454

* This figure represents crisis services to crime victims, however, crisis workers provide services to other citizens. Services to crime victims comprise only 24% of their total caseload (yearly caseload estimate = 936).

** 199 of these refused or did not require service.

At-the-scene crisis intervention was provided to 168 clients, almost

exclusively victims of attacks against the person. Crisis intervention home visits were made in 168 cases. The majority of these were domestic assaults (84%) followed by sex offenses (16%). Within the sexual offense category, calls more often involved the parents of child victims of sexual assault.[4] Police officers rarely called crisis workers in cases of property offenses or robberies. Only 2 cases could be identified over the 12 month period. The most common service provided by crisis workers to crime victims was immediate short term counselling and referral to other social agencies, followed by information about the legal services available, and transportation. Normally, there was only 1 visit with the client, although in some cases up to 4 have taken place. The vast majority of personal counselling sessions resulted in a referral to another agency (80 - 85% of time as estimated by staff).

Based on intermittent program monitoring, it was calculated that support staff and volunteers handled 70 telephone calls each day, accounting for a yearly total of 17,640. The majority of these calls (59%) were from victims of criminal or traffic incidents although insurance agents accounted for almost 1/4 of all calls. The most frequent request was for the police case number of their incident, usually used for insurance purposes. Other inquiries were about concerns related to the criminal incident (e.g., whether someone has been charged, whether the police are still investigating the incident).

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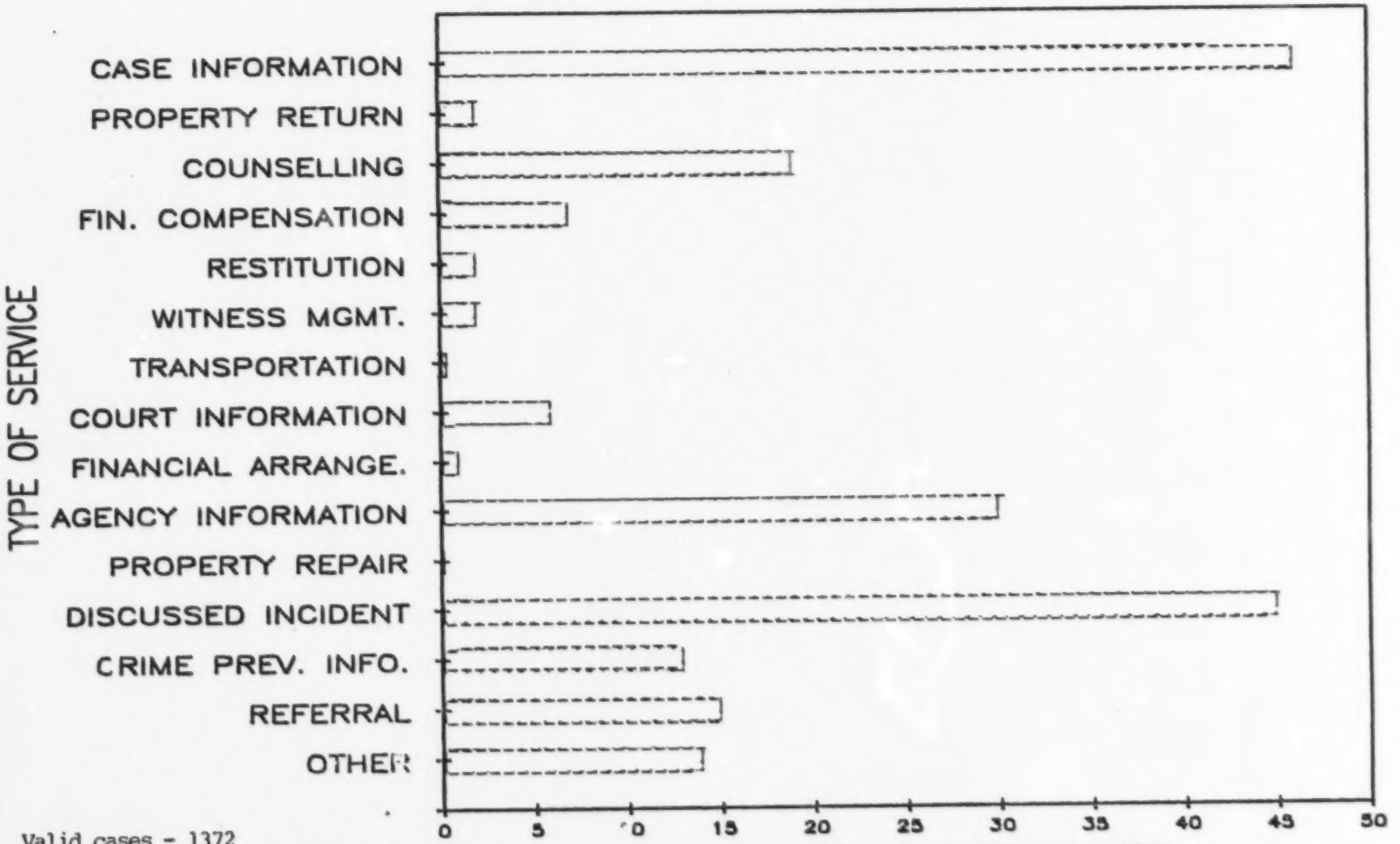
[4] When serious incidents of this nature (e.g. rapes) occur, members of the Sex Crimes Unit are called out and generally directly request the assistance of the Calgary Sexual Assault Center.

FIGURE 2.3: SERVICES PROVIDED BY VOLUNTEERS OVER A 1 YEAR PERIOD *



Valid cases - 1372

* Percentage totals exceed 100% of valid cases as more than 1 service may have been provided each client.

Volunteers personally contacted and offered service to 1646 clients over a 1-year period. Figure 2.3 details the program's service-related activities for these cases. The most common service activity was provision of information to crime victims (46%) including details that were needed for insurance claims (e.g., case numbers), the name of the investigating officer, and the status of the case, (e.g., has anyone been charged, is the case still actively being investigated?). Staff also gave out information about other agencies or services that might be needed by clients in 30% of cases. In 45% and 19% of cases respectively, the service comprised simply a discussion of the incident or some support/counselling that might have been required to recover from the personal impact of the incident. Other important but less common services were crime prevention information, (13%) assistance with financial compensation applications (7%), and court date and outcome information (6%).[5]

The program's focus on 'persons' offense was reflected in these statistics which indicated that such victims accounted for 70% of all cases. (Police records indicated a much greater occurrence of property offenses.) When clients were identified through the program's own screening activities, all 5 police districts were proportionally represented, but it was apparent that requests for crisis intervention came primarily from the districts where crisis workers had been physically located for the longest period of time. Clients were identified mainly through report screening (85%). Self-referrals accounted for 9% of cases

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[5] Based on a 1-week monitoring of occurrence reports received, V/CU receives 97% of the case reports it requests.

while 5% were police officer referrals. Most of the 9% of client self-referrals resulted from police officer suggestions.[6] The majority of cases (69%) required under 1/2 hour to complete however, those other 31% of cases required 74% of service hours. This was interpreted to mean that in the majority of cases, service workers quickly provided the service or dealt with the concern.

It has always been a policy in the V/CU to refer clients to other agencies rather than to duplicate services already provided elsewhere in Calgary. A strict definition of referral is used, that is, there must be personal contact between V/CU and the referral agency to set up the referral.

Program staff made referrals in 206 cases (15% of cases), referrals to the Alberta Crimes Compensation Board accounting for 28% (n=58) of these. There were 33 referrals (16%) to other police programs among them the Senior Citizen Program, the investigating officer, Crime Prevention and the Race Relations Unit. Other referrals were made to the prosecutor or the Witness Central Unit or to other court services (14%). It was interesting to note that counselling agencies did not figure highly in referral roles. Staff explained this as stemming from the fact that simply offering support and attention to the effects of the victimization was a calming influence and that while they often suggested such agencies to clients, it was in the form of information rather than a direct

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[6] Subsequent to the period covered by this analysis, the Calgary Police Service began to routinely distribute 'victim cards' to all crime victims. It may be expected that it will result in a greater proportion of officer and client self-referrals as well as significant changes in the type of service provided.

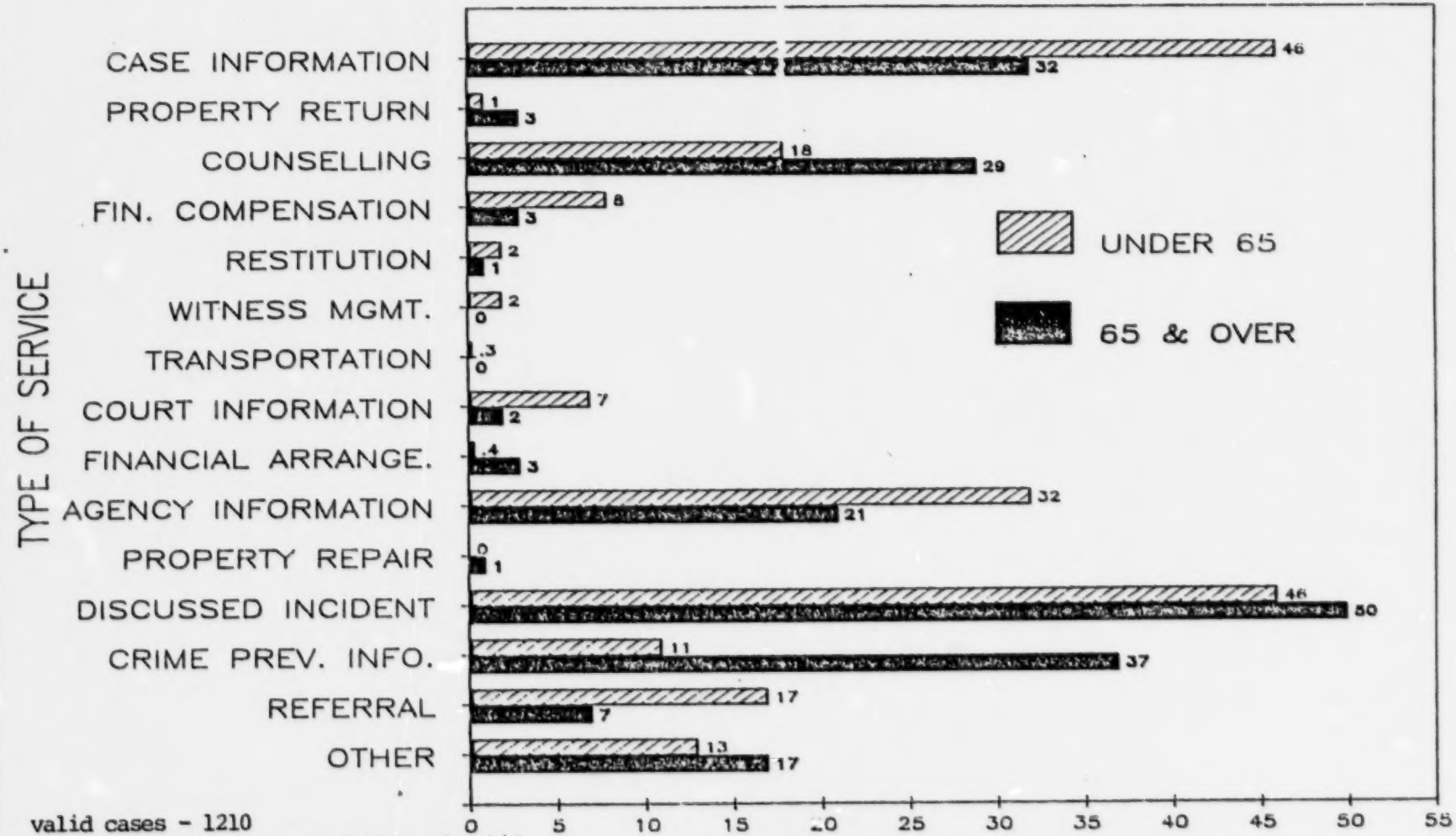
referral.

When the sample composition of those who refused or did not require service (12%) was analysed it was found, not surprisingly, that where officers made referrals there were fewer refusals than where victims were contacted through the pro-active approach. No significant differences in referrals were found when broken out according to age, sex, and type of incident (with the exception of robbery victims who 'refused' service more often).

The Elderly

Because the V/CU focused on the post-victimization needs of the elderly this group was over-represented in the sample. First, the elderly required post-victimization services in almost the same percentage of cases (13%) as other age categories (12%). Second, the type of service provided appeared to be a product more of the offense to which they were subjected than to any unique post-victimization needs. For example, Figure 2.4 indicates that crime prevention information was provided in 37% of elderly versus 11% of other age groups. This reflected the fact that elderly victims of housebreakings were always called whereas other housebreaking victims were not routinely contacted. On the other hand assistance with crimes compensation claims was less frequently given the elderly and they were disproportionately undersampled in 'persons' offenses. Third, these data also indicated that officers referred proportionately more elderly crime victims to the program than they did other age groups (9% vs. 3%), and that a greater proportion of the elderly were

FIGURE 2.4: SERVICES PROVIDED TO CLIENTS UNDER AND OVER 65 YEARS OF AGE (SEE ALSO TABLE 2.11)



valid cases - 1210

* Percentage totals exceed 100% of valid cases as more than 1 service may have been provided each client.

proportion of the elderly were personally visited by volunteersor staff (28% vs. 8%). The elderly were also less likely to call into the office seeking help than were other age groups.

Property vs. 'Persons' Offense Victims

When these data were analysed by offense types, it was found, not surprisingly, that attempted homicide victims, and families of homicide victims and sudden deaths required more counselling and support, whereas theft and damage victims were more apt to require information. It was also found that (attempted) homicide victims required a greater number of services (average = 2.8) than other offense types (average = 1.8 to 2.0). Other than this group, the types of services given various offense groups were not significantly different. Offenses that were likely to require lengthy periods of contact were attempted homicide, sudden deaths and suicides. Officers were more likely to refer cases of (attempted) homicide, deaths or suicides than other offense categories. This suggested that in most cases police officers narrowly defined the role of victim services. They infrequently referred property offense, robbery, or assault victims.

Based on the fact that only minor differences appeared when the data was analysed according to type of offense and some demographic characteristics of the victim, it was concluded that the program did not preclude any types of victims who may have needed service. Nor were they focusing undue attention on sub-segments of the population.

In summary, information indicated that the V/CU was indeed reaching the Calgary crime victims it targets, and from a service activity point of view, was providing the services it elaborated in its program goals. The only exception to this was the implementation of property return goals. (A major reorganization is presently being undertaken in the property room. It is hoped that property return service will be implemented once this is complete.)

SECTION 2 - VICTIM RESPONSE TO SERVICES

Calgary crime victims were also interviewed to determine whether they received the services they needed and whether they were satisfied with them (272). Treatment and Comparison groups were established. The Treatment group was composed of clients served by the Victim/Crisis Unit (n=182) and the Comparison group (n=90) of crime victims who did not receive any of V/CU's services. The questionnaire that was administered dealt with their need for and satisfaction with all crime victim services. Therefore, to some extent respondent opinions reflected their opinions of services received from other than the V/CU.

A significant number of respondents (44%), who, according to program records received some service, responded that they did not have any need of services. While this initially seemed to indicate that V/CU was not targeting its outreach efforts at appropriate clients, it was speculated that when service requirements were quickly satisfied or routinely and quickly taken care of, respondents did not recall them as needs. Also support/counselling was considered a service by staff, although it may not have been interpreted as so by clients. This service comprised a considerable proportion of service delivery.

Nonetheless, these data pointed out the limitations of reliance on the pro-active approach. (It is not unreasonable to expect that the officers who have personal contact with victims, or the victims themselves, are in the best position to identify appropriate clients.) The limited information on victims'

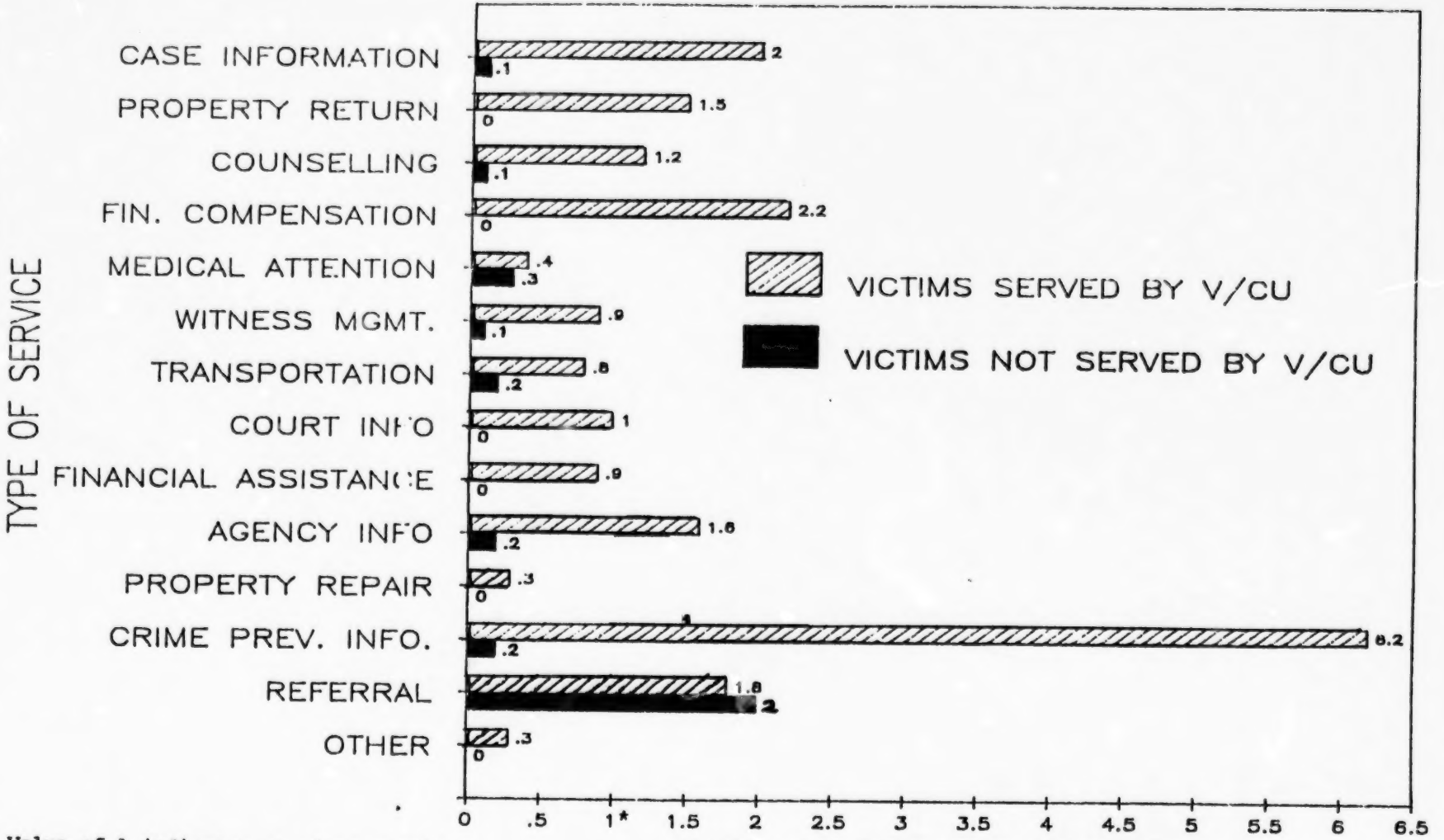
concerns in police reports prompted staff to offer service in more rather than less cases, in the rationale that needy clients would not be missed. As a result, victims often simply discussed the incident with the volunteer and/or received some information about the case or some crime prevention suggestions.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the ratio of each service required to those received for clients and non-clients. (A value of 1 indicated that the number of services received overall, equaled the number of services needed.) As can be seen, V/CU clients were more successful in receiving needed services. In several categories, for example crime prevention information, case information, assistance with financial compensation applications, V/CU service delivery surpassed clients' reported needs. In only one category, referral services, did the non-client group receive services in numbers equal to or in excess of what they stated as needed. Overall, 74% of those receiving service from the V/CU and others reported that they were very satisfied as opposed to 43% of the non-client group.

When respondents were asked whether there was "any help/information that (they) needed, but did not receive", significantly more of the Comparison group (40%) than the Treatment group (24%) identified some such need. Generally, the need centered around information requirements, either about the police investigation or court case, although 9% of the Comparison group complained that their incident did not get the police attention it deserved.

It appears from these data that despite V/CU intervention some client needs

FIGURE 3.1: RATIO OF SERVICES RECEIVED TO SERVICES NEEDED (SEE ALSO TABLE 3.4)



* Value of 1 indicates services received are equal to services reported as needed.

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client needs still remained unsatisfied. Not all service needscan be satisfied by the V/CU. For example, many victims requested information about their cases that could only be answered by the investigating officer. While V/CU will provide information about how to get in touch with officers, victims can experience some difficulty in reaching them. To cite another example, V/CU staff may inform victims of the various sources of financial compensation, but have no control over how they are treated by these other agencies. Nonetheless, it may be appropriate for staff and volunteers to suggest that clients call them when they are experiencing difficulty with other agencies.

Significantly more of the Treatment group also reported that they 1) were made aware of their legal rights and services available; 2) were able to get in touch with people who could help them; 3) thought the police paid attention to their problems; and finally 4) felt that the Calgary Police Service is concerned about the needs and problems of crime victims. The latter two statements again point to the halo effect that seemed to accompany service delivery. Respondents tended to respond more positively to other services or were more satisfied with their experience with the Calgary Police Service and its officers when served by this program.

Elderly Crime Victims

When the elderly respondents (n=39) were broken out they were not found to have needs signficantly different from other age groups. Most differences were accounted for by the different kind of offense to which they were subjected.

For example, there were proportionately fewer homicide/assault and sex victims and more robbery and housebreaking victims among the elderly. Nor did the elderly appear to have more numerous needs; in fact, they reported slightly fewer service needs (average = 1.35 vs 1.62).

Generally, the elderly received the services they required and were satisfied with them. They did not appear to be accessing other senior citizen programs that could provide services. V/CU staff reported that although offered, these were not generally needed, and the elderly victim frequently indicated that services available through V/CU were sufficient. When concerns or dissatisfaction were mentioned they generally centered a need for information on the part of the victim or some difficulty reaching the investigating officer.

Property vs. 'Persons' Offense Victims

When respondents were divided into 'property' and 'persons' offense[7] categories, it was found that 1) personal offense victims were more apt to indicate that they had at least one service need and also to report this as an emergency, 2) the groups were similar in reporting that they did receive victim services needs, and 3) there were some differences in the types of services provided. Property offense victims received proportionately more information regarding the investigation of their cases (37% vs. 22%), and crime prevention information (37% vs. 15%) than the personal offense group, and less help in

[7] Persons offenses include all attacks against the person including homicides, assaults, sex offenses, robbery.

obtaining financial reparation (4% vs. 19%). Satisfaction with services was generally high and did not show significant variation between offense groups. Neither offense group appeared to have a significantly higher percentage of unmet needs, indicating that the program did not targeting on one offense type at the expense of others.

When Charges are Laid

Needs studies have consistently indicated victims' desire for information about their cases. The information requested does not end with information on police activities concerning the case, but includes information on the progress of the case through court. While there is some debate concerning which agency should provide this service, the V/CU to a limited extent included this service as part of their goals and activities. For the most part, it entailed advising the victim that a party was charged/arrested, and of the first court appearance location and date. The client was then told how to get further information either from V/CU or the court clerk's office.

In cases where charges were laid, it was found that the number of needs expressed was higher than when no charges were laid (average = 1.9 vs. 1.6). This was explained by a much higher percentage of court information needs. Other findings were that 87% of V/CU clients versus 58% of non-clients reported that they knew or were told that charges had been laid or an arrest made over their incident. Additionally, 82% vs. 50% of these were told the first appearance date of the charged party. The V/CU was the party that provided this

information to the respondent in 23% of these cases. Regarding the outcome of the case, 65% of clients versus 30% of others were informed of the outcome of the case. For non-clients, the victim nearly always learned of this in court (86%), while clients were more likely to have been told by the V/CU or the police officer. A high percentage of both groups thought this to be important information for victims to have, and a significantly higher percentage of V/CU clients agreed that they received enough and adequate information on their court cases. Finally, in cases where charges were laid, a significantly higher percentage of V/CU clients reported that "overall, (they were) satisfied with the services received...". The percentage reporting satisfaction was in fact higher than any other sub-group analysed and indicate a positive victim response to this service.

Access to Financial Compensation

Ensuring that victims who are injured as a result of a crime are informed of their right to apply for compensation through the Alberta Crimes Compensation Board is a goal explicitly stated in V/CU literature.

In total, 41 respondents indicated that they suffered financial loss over $100 as a result of an injury. Of these, 89% of V/CU's clients reported they were informed of their right to apply for compensation as opposed to 31% of the Comparison group. Further, of these 41 cases, 86% of the Treatment group versus 23% of the Comparison group did make application.

Due to the considerable length of time it takes to process and bring down decisions on claims, roughly half of these claimants had received a decision on their applications. Among clients, 25% resulted in awards and 15% were refused compensation or were denied due to ineligibility. Forty-six percent were still under consideration. Among non-clients, 8% resulted in an award, 8% were refused and 8% were still under consideration. Amounts of awards varied greatly, ranging from $100 to over $3000. These figures illustrated the benefits of V/CU activities in this area.

This information, and that from the 12-month monitoring period was supported by data from the ACCB. Their Annual Report indicated that in the 1-year period ending March 31, 1983, applications from Calgary increased almost threefold from the previous 4-year average (Figure 3.2). (As information on the latest year (to March 1984) is not yet available, it is not known whether this increase has been maintained; however these initial findings point to considerable V/CU impact in this area.) Interviews with ACCB staff also indicated that the quality of applications was higher than from other sources, and the number of ineligible applications was lower than average. The Secretary to the Chairman of the ACCB also suggested that this led to more efficiency and speed in processing applications, however this area has not been investigated. Interviews with (victim) respondents indicated that the length of time from application to decision was a cause for complaint for some applicants.

SECTION 3 - POLICE COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE

One hundred police officers representing every police district were interviewed. They generally thought that the V/CU had a role to play in the Calgary Police Service, and felt that it held some benefits both for themselves and for crime victims. The questionnaire administered to police officers dealt with their knowledge of, use of, and attitudes about the program.

Knowledge of the Program

Seventy-four percent (74%) of respondents felt that the program was very or fairly well known to them, and 80% had met or talked to some program staff. Fewer police officers (approx. 6 in 10) had seen the videos that offer information about victim services, and 39% were familiar with the V/CU pamphlet. Only 26% had been present at a formal presentation by V/CU. This experience was positively related to police officer referral of cases to the Unit for their follow up. It is impossible to know what responses on these questions mean in terms of respondents' absolute knowledge of the Unit, but a significant percentage (41%) did not know about an important component of the program, that is, its use of volunteers. Additionally the fact that 15% said they had little or no information about the program indicated that some activities may be required to increase program knowledge by officers.

Use of the Program

The data show that officers indeed carried out department policy by distributing business cards which advertise victim services. Their reporting indicated that this was being done in 64% of all cases. Also, 76% of officers had called a crisis worker (an average of 4 times in the past year), 81% frequently or sometimes told victims to call the unit (an average of 26 times over the past year), and 76% called V/CU and asked that they contact a client (an average of 4 times over the past year). This indicates good participation by most police officers. Notwithstanding these facts, 20 - 30% reported that they never use the service. Given the fact that many victims whom V/CU contacts are not referred from officers but need and accept services, it is likely that these figures figures could be increased.

Attitudes about the Program

Officers' attitudes about the program were generally positive. They felt that it represented an improvement in services to crime victims and help to victims over a trying period. Of note was that they agreed most strongly with the statement that the program resulted in good public relations for the police department. While this is not a negative factor, it is the researcher's opinion that some officers felt this to be V/CU's most important function and that service to officers and victims was secondary to this. Of all the statements read, police officers were more likely to disagree or to be undecided on whether the program increased victims' awareness of their legal rights and resulted in

better cooperation from crime victims. With respect to the last point, Canadian studies have shown that victim/witness willingness to cooperate in the judicial system is not as problematic in Canada as in the United States for example.

When officers were asked to agree or disagree with statements expressing possible negative features, officers were found to generally disagree that they (or victims) were effected negatively by the program. Officers disagreed most strongly with the statement that the program results in no important benefits for themselves, but were less apt to disagree with the statements that the V/CU does things that "should be done by a good officer" and resulted in "extra work for officers". Over 40% agreed or were undecided on these last two statements.

Officers also defined serious personal injury or crisis situations as incidents where V/CU was most helpful to them. Analysis of program records indicated that these were precisely the types of cases where police officers did refer to V/CU. Nonetheless, other information already presented indicated that property offense victims do require service, though mainly of a non-emergency nature. In fact, a great deal of V/CU service concerns property offenses. Taken together, these features suggested that officers were more aware of the unit's crisis activities or that the decision to refer to the V/CU was made to some extent according to whether it will be helpful to the officer, and possibly victim needs were not well evaluated. It may be appropriate for police officers to be reminded of the types and extensive use of services by property crime victims.

Finally, officers generally favored having a Victim/Crisis Unit in the Calgary Police Service and felt that its most important benefit for themselves was that it represented a saving of time. Also frequently mentioned was the indirect benefit of victims using the Unit as a resource centre (to get information, etc.). Finally, police respondents felt that the services of the program were helpful to them in non-crime incidents.

SECTION 4 - ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

The above analysis of data indicates that program staff have implemented the majority of planned activities and have received a positive response from crime victims. On the whole, the program has contributed to an increase in the quality and quantity of services available to victims (who report crimes) in Calgary. Police officers have also indicated acceptance of the program, and it has had some impact on other criminal justice areas, notably better access to financial compensation by crime victims and information about court cases.

These data do however suggest several issues which deserve further attention. Some of these do not lend themselves to quantitative analysis, or are problem areas that cannot be fully discussed strictly through analysis of the questionnaire data. Other features such as the efficacy of a police-based program, are tangential to these data, but are important components or pre-requisites of program success.

The experience of the researcher as participant observer for an extensive period of time (three years) has provided the opportunity for the accumulation of a considerable quantity of such qualitative data, and an in depth knowledge of the program and the various forces which have shaped it. Some of these issues are discussed below. Of necessity, this discussion is more speculative than the foregoing, but where possible will be supported by the use of the quantitative data discussed above.

The Police-Based Program

The fact that this program is police-based has had a fundamental impact on its activities. Several important features are immediately evident.

The first is that the cases dealt with by this program were composed almost solely of reported crimes. It is known that a considerable percentage of crimes go unreported in Canada. Because clients come mainly from report screening and police officer referrals, victims who do not report incidents would not normally be identified and served. It is difficult to imagine that a citizen who decided against reporting a crime would request some victim service from a police-based program. Indeed, if this happened they would be urged to report the incident. At times this might be a necessary prerequisite for service, for example, if financial compensation for injury was required. The negligible caseload of victims of non-reported crime is a limitation of this and other police-based programs, but one that is not easily overcome given such an organizational setting.

A second important feature is that sponsorship within the police department is usually accompanied by access to police files, and thus facilitates the identification of clients in a routine and consistent manner. This has been an important component of the V/CU as the vast majority of clients are located in this manner. Police reports have proved an invaluable source of information about the incident, and expected client needs as they contain salient information that might be otherwise unknown.

Third, the police-based setting also encourages officer use of crisis intervention workers, thus improving the immediacy of program reponse. Records indicate that crisis workers are called out an average of 78 times per month, 18 of these to assist crime victims. This rate of referral is still lower than the Victim/Crisis Unit would like to achieve. However, it is likely that a community-based organization would have an even lower rate of referral from police officers. This is because the visibility and legitimacy that issues from being an official component of the police department encourages the police to make referrals to it. Notwithstanding this point, the program has not yet achieved the level of referrals that it wishes. This appears to be a problem common to many victim programs.

A fourth important feature flowing from the fact that the program is police-based, is that activities tended to center around those that directly concerned the police investigation or activities, or that could also provide some benefit to the police department. This was because the program had access to police records. On the other hand, there were considerably fewer services provided as victim/clients became witnesses in court or involved with the court process. This program had no <u>direct</u> access to information about victims' involvement with the courts (for example, when they will be subpoenaed or for what reason, and as a result, had difficulty at times locating such information for clients.

In effect, the program's location with the police department and some distance from court buildings cannot be said to encourage the provision of

witness management services (from the program's side), or requests for services (from the victim's side). It may be speculated that a witness program located close to the courts would experience similar difficulties with respect to police information, and therefore such comprehensive services might require two centers of operation. In any case, program sponsorship by either of these two elements of the criminal justice system, or any other part for that matter, will give rise to such problems. Programs should not allow themselves to be so co-opted by a sponsoring body as to lose sight of their fundamental aim which is to provide crime victims with the services they require.

Given the fact that a victim may come into contact with several autonomous elements within the criminal justice system, a comprehensive service is preferable. This is difficult when a program is located in and sponsored by one of these elementsts. A community-based program may circumvent this problem, but may be faced with other problems of locating clients and lack of access to information.

Locating Clients/Referral Sources

Locating appropriate clients is of primary concern to all victim programs. The V/CU identifies clients through any one of three sources: police report screening, direct referrals from officers, or client self-referrals. Over 80% of V/CU caseload was identified through report screening and approximately 5% were referred by police officers, mostly in crisis situations. Although the outreach approach (report screening) is considered essential and does, given 1

or 2 days lapse, locate all of the targeted population, V/CU would like to increase police referrals for the following reasons.

First, the face-to-face contact between victim and officer allows officers to identify real need, even in cases that would not normally fall into the target population; second, there is minimum time lapse before program involvement; and third, it results in contact between officers and program staff possibly increasing officer acceptance and further referrals.

Officers tended not to refer non-crisis cases and this pointed to the importance of access to all appropriate files. Officer referrals were low possibly because they feel that there is only a small percentage of victims who require follow-up service, because victim needs were not made known to them, because they had preformed notions about the usefulness or appropriateness of calling in the unit in certain circumstances,.because follow-up needs only surface at a later date, because such referrals are a low priority item on their list of activities, because of lack of time, or for other reasons. It is also possible that they suggest to the victim to call V/CU, but that this type of referral is never identified if it results in a brief telephone call to clerical staff or volunteers.

Further, officers may not feel that they are fully informed about the V/CU program. Twenty percent (20%) had not met or talked to staff, 15% felt they had little or no information about the UUnit, 40% did not know the program used volunteers and the great majority of officers identified the program as useful

primarily in serious 'persons' offenses and non-crime fatalities. On the other hand, police officers generally viewed the unit positively and felt it held some benefits both for themselves and for victims.

This information seems to indicate that officers are more aware of the crisis than non-crisis (or follow-up) activities of the unit, and that officers hold a narrower view of program activities than is the case. Obviously, the crisis component has a higher visibility and results in more contact with police officers than follow-up work. The follow-up work however is considered an important program component and encompasses a myriad of activities. It is possible that in-service education should expand on this area of program activities.

Interpreting these data is difficult, but they seem to indicate that although officers hold favorable attitudes about the unit, they are reluctant to participate fully. For the most part, their attitudes could be considered on of benign neglect. It can be speculated that some of this phonomena stems from the different work values of officers and service workers. Police officers are trained to value law enforcement and apprehension highly, while victim programs place emphasis on social work values, (e.g., support, counselling,etc.). The resolution of this tension may not be easy, but police officers may be more apt to refer if they could see some direct benefit for themselves. On the other hand, this victim program is concerned that it not become simply part of the 'police' system, but remains mindful that the victim is their primary client.

The net result of low referrals and limited knowledge of the program is that some needy victims who do not fall within the targeted population may go unserved. Also time may be spent offering services that are viewed as unnecessary or are refused by the client. This is born out by the victim questionnaire data which found that fully 44% of respondents stated that they had no service needs, although Service Reports indicated that they had received some service. (It should be kept in mind when interpreting this that needs quickly and efficiently satisfied by V/CU staff may not be remembered retrospectively as a 'need'.)

It is likely that this imperfect marriage of interests and values will at times be problematic in some cases. Police referrals may be increased if officers are made more aware of various functions of the Unit as well as the ways its services are useful to them. Further, if 'unneeded' services are reduced through increased focus on direct police referrals, the time freed up could be used in ways that would more obviously benefit the officer.

The Use of Volunteers

The program under discussion has used volunteers to deliver all non-crisis services to crime victims. The decision to utilize volunteer skills was based on the belief 1) that trained volunteers could efficiently perform these duties and derive some personal satisfaction for them, and 2) it would result in program cost saving. Although data collected did not directly address the issue of volunteer utilization, the researcher's observations allows for some

discussion on the way that this has shaped the program and the pressures this has placed on program staff.

To some extent that use of volunteers has been considered experimental, and many unexpected benefits and some difficulties have arisen over the past 3 years. The most obvious advantage of having volunteers is that they want to work for crime victims and further, as volunteers they bring with them a measure of independence which assures they act as advocates for the victim. The fact that their careers or jobs are not bound up with the police department or criminal justice system enhances this. Further, their usage provides some cost saving for the police department. Finally, the experience of the V/CU program is that volunteers have injected into the program an enthusiasm and eagerness that might not have otherwise been achieved.

Volunteers, at the same time, require an enormous amount of time and effort to recruit, train, manage and supervise. This program attempts to maintain about 40 volunteers and their management requires a full time Volunteer Coordinator and one half of the Constable's position. In fact, day-to-day supervision requires a staff member to be present in the volunteers' room at all times. This ties up a great deal of staff time.

While it goes without saying that volunteers require training for any kind of work, the nature of the work performed in this unit results in some unique problems. Volunteers are faced with a great variety of requests from clients, and must be knowledgeable about not only the police department but all other

areas of the criminal justice system. (It was decided not to have volunteers specialize in certain areas but rather to train all to handle any incident.) This requires a considerable investment in training. Staff have mentioned that this investment is too high for the work payoff that is produced by 3 hours/week volunteers, and that these volunteers require inordinate amounts of supervision as a result. Unless such volunteers remain with the program over a 1-year period, this is not felt to be an equal trade off. Another concern, often voiced by the volunteers themselves, is that 3 hours per week does not provide them with the continuity with clients that makes for a rewarding volunteer experience. As a result, the program has spent far more effort establishing relationships with educational institutions who require practicum placements for their students. Also, volunteers are most often recruited from students in educational courses which require a certain number of volunteer hours in the community per week.

A further consideration about the use of volunteers is the tension that can develop between paid staff and volunteers, particularly if they are performing similar functions. In the program under discussion, there was initial concern by crisis workers that a successful volunteer program would result in the elimination of their paid positions. It was due to this concern that it was decided that volunteers only perform non-crisis (or follow-up) activities. This was certainly a departure from initial plans and has significantly altered the nature of volunteer work, but it has worked out satisfactorily. Nonetheless it is important that volunteers do not get relegated to doing the least desirable or rewarding work.

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This issue is related to the level of volunteer expertise. In the program under discussion, volunteers are trained to do follow-up or non-emergency work. Many other victim programs use volunteers for crisis work. Although the data collected does not touch on volunteers performance of crisis work, the experience of the researcher observing paid crisis staff perform these functions prompts some concern that volunteers may not have the necessary training to adequately perform crisis work. It is difficult to imagine that the skills that are necessary to crisis intervention, resolution and counselling can be learned in a training period. Common sense and and level-headedness are of course important components, however crisis resolution requires far more than these. Many of the clients seen by crisis workers suffer not only from the obvious presenting problem but have a host of interpersonal and other problems - for example, in domestic assault cases. To involve anyone but a very competent crisis intervention specialist might exacerbate a problem.

A further concern when volunteers perform crisis work is that of security. Crisis workers may be placed in extremely volatile situations and worker security is of foremost concern. While paid employees are usually insured against accident or injury while on the job, volunteers may not be. Normally volunteers should work in pairs and be supervised at all times.

The foregoing list of concerns is not meant to discourage programs from utilizing volunteers. However unless a program has a strong philosophical committment to volunteerism, it is not likely to successfully overcome these problems. Careful training, clear job desciptions, supervision, and feedback

are all requirements of a good volunteer program and require considerable work. The decision whether or not to employ volunteers should include consideration of the nature of the work involved, the expected benefits for both volunteers and program, the training and supervision necessary, and the cost benefits.

Unneeded Services

The issue of providing services that are not demanded by crime victims is one that is closely related to referrals and the way that crime victim/clients are identified. The victim survey found that 44% of respondents who received some service reported that they did not have any service 'needs'. There are some plausible explanations for this, for example, retrospective perception may not accurately reflect needs, and further there were many 'small' services provided which although appreciated may not have been viewed by respondents as 'needed'. This points to the need to examine the way that the program identifies its clients.

Most V/CU clients were identified through the pro-active approach of having staff screen police reports and identifying for follow-up ones which met certain criteria. Because police reports are an imperfect manifestation of victim needs and because all victims who meet certain criteria are called, identifying clients in this manner will result in offering 'unrequested' services. This is not to say that these services are without value. The personal contact between victim and police department allows citizens to know that someone is concerned about them, and more importantly, it informs victims that they can get help in

the future if they need it. Nonetheless, the most important goal of victim programs is to ensure that services are provided in the most needed cases. This would lead us to emphasize identification of these cases, and to consider police and victim self-referrals as a crucial source of clients.

The program under discussion has used various techniques to encourage these referrals. First, police officers are instructed to distribute 'victim cards'; second, the program is publicized within the police department through posters, brochures and articles in the in-house magazine; and third, personal presentations were made to officers at zone days, parades, etc., early in program operation. Each of these 3 three initiatives are considered important and will have to be maintained in order to encourage police officer and victim self-referrals.

It is unlikely that the outreach approach will be abandoned and some 'unneeded' services will likely continue to occur. This may be considered a function more of the method of client identification than imperfect client targeting.

Non-Crime Clients

Although the program under discussion was set up to serve crime victims, an important portion of their caseload included non-crime clients. This was particularly true of crisis work where only 24% of the caseload involved crime victims. The crisis component was originally set up to assist in domestic

assaults (early on they were called the "squabble squad"), but due to inadequate referrals from officers and their (officers') propensity to call crisis workers out in any case where they felt their assistance was needed, the actual caseload composition included many other cases. Typical cases included sudden deaths (traffic accidents), suicides, and child welfare concerns. Crisis workers were also called in cases where juveniles were found committing crimes (e.g. shoplifting), to provide counselling services for the family. In the case of the non-crisis workload, fewer non-crime clients were found mostly because the outreach method targets crime victims solely.

Therefore, in this program, service to parties in other than crime situations was included as part of the target population, at least within the crisis component.

Other programs may not wish to include this group within their target populations. If such programs rely solely on their outreach efforts to locate clients, there will be no problems, however, if police referrals are a source of client identification, it is likely that the non-crime victim will form part of their caseloads.

To simply request that these cases not be referred may not be appropriate as police officers may feel that a program 1) is being too selective, 2) does not want to get involved with difficult cases, or 3) is not as helpful to police officers as it should be. Further, police officers may view these clients as in need of need help and, therefore, appropriate clients. In short, it may be

unwise to refuse service to these as doing so may jeopardize the chances that crime victim referrals will be made in the future. It is probable that population criteria need to be flexible, not rigid. In the case of the program discussed in this paper, more community public relations and police acceptance was gained by helping the families of 2 young people killed in a lightning storm than any other single case.

Police-based programs have to make their presence felt within their departments in order to stimulate referrals. Assisting in non-crime incidents may be one way of doing so.